

# Corporate responsibility

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As a publicly owned broadcaster with a remit set out by an Act of Parliament, Channel 4 has a clearly defined social purpose. But at a time of growing public awareness that big businesses have big responsibilities, we have gone beyond the remit to set out a formal statement of Channel 4's wider role as a good corporate citizen. Last year, a programme of change was set in place with the adoption of a statement, drawn up by a staff working group and approved by the Channel 4 Board, which read:

**"Channel 4's role goes beyond creating powerful television. In terms of corporate responsibility our mission is to inspire and challenge the behaviour of *our people, our producers and suppliers* and *our audiences* to promote positive social, environmental and personal change."**

A year on, how have we done?

## Our people

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**98% of staff say they feel proud to work for Channel 4  
95% support the strategic direction of Channel 4**

### Training

Investment in staff training and development increased 12% in 2005 to the equivalent of £869 per employee, far higher than the UK average for similar sized organisations. A whole new portfolio of in-house courses was established to help staff develop and extend their competencies, and to encourage better communication within and between teams. A new programme of leadership development was created. We now routinely make available places on our in-house courses to Channel 4 suppliers and production partners. During the year two-thirds of staff took part in some personal or professional training programme provided by Channel 4.

### Staff Appraisal

To ensure better quality conversations between managers and their reports, and encourage greater focus on development, we introduced a new appraisal process and supporting online system in 2005. This is complemented by a confidential system of colleague feedback to focus staff on how they achieve their objectives. The process will continue to be developed in the future and is related to a staff bonus scheme.

### National Skills Day

Channel 4 was once again a major sponsor of National Skills Day, an industry-wide initiative aimed at raising awareness of the importance of professional and personal development.

### Environment

We routinely measure air quality, energy and water use and the volume of waste we generate from our offices. We make practical provision for recycling and for the responsible and minimal use of energy. In 2005, we commissioned a full environmental audit of Channel 4 by independent experts.

### Diversity

Channel 4 is an active member of the Cultural Diversity Network which brings together all major broadcasters in a common commitment to achieve an industry whose workforce more appropriately mirrors the diversity of British society. We have set ourselves the target of having 13% of our workforce and 9% of our senior management from black or minority ethnic communities. The current figures are 12% and 7% respectively. Channel 4 is also an active member of the Broadcasting and

Creative Industries Disability Network which is committed to increasing the presence of disabled people on screen and in all areas of the workforce.

### Staff Survey

A staff survey asked respondents to assess their understanding of and support for such issues as the strategic direction of the business, its customer focus, the quality of teamwork and creative thinking. The findings showed a marked improvement across the board compared with a similar survey conducted in 2003. 94% thought Channel 4 was a fair employer, 95% agreed with the strategic direction provided by management, and a remarkable 98% said they were proud to be working for Channel 4.

### Our producers and suppliers

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**Channel 4 is the UK's biggest investor in independent creative businesses.**

In 2005, Channel 4 broadcast programmes made by 311 different independent production companies (substantially more than any other channel), representing every nation and region in the UK. In a London-dominated industry we invested £107.7 million outside the M25 area and, in doing so, we estimate we provided employment for more than 7,000 skilled men and women. To sustain this ecology of production we invested more than £5 million in training and development schemes – many of which are described on pages 30 and 31 of this annual review.

Channel 4 invests heavily in and actively supports the industry training organisation Skillset, the National Film and Television School and many other schemes and courses. In 2005, we funded the establishment of the Channel 4 British Documentary Foundation. As well as dozens of opportunities to benefit individuals at every stage of their careers, we offer structural support to a very fragmented and volatile production sector with initiatives such as:

- **Company Development Deals** of up to £50,000 each which are offered to production companies. These deals are not tied to particular commissions or outputs but allow companies to invest in new people, new policies and new ideas in a way their normal cashflow would not allow.
- **Researcher Development Programme** has, over the last six years, enabled 60 small, non-London based production companies to employ full-time researchers for a year so that they can plan a more systematic flow of projects, reduce their costs and raise their ambition. The scheme also gives them access to commercially valuable industry data and, perhaps most importantly, to senior commissioning editors, not just within Channel 4 but right across the broadcast industry.
- **The Research Centre for Television and Interactivity** offers tailored packages of support and training to independent production companies outside London, including overseas visits to enable small independent producers to familiarise themselves with the international marketplace.

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## Our audiences

**“Thank you. I did not know these things were going on and I’m glad you made the programme.” Viewer calling in response to Channel 4’s Torture Season**

### Enriching

Channel 4 programmes provide a stimulating and original contribution to Britain’s national conversation – from **Big Brother**’s exploration of the norms and values of contemporary society to documentaries, dramas and reality programmes that explore issues of political, cultural, social and scientific interest. Some eight hours of Channel 4 programming each week was backed up by online resources and, often, by printed material and telephone support, too. Our websites provide information but they also encourage visitors to share and exchange experiences and ideas of their own. For example, **IDEASFACTORY** ([channel4.com/ideasfactory](http://channel4.com/ideasfactory)) has grown into a major national network, with support from Regional Development Agencies, which helps young people who want to make a career in the creative industries, by providing information about work and training and by showcasing development and networking opportunities. Channel 4’s own talent website ([channel4.com/4talent](http://channel4.com/4talent)) gives visitors information about our training and development schemes, as well as tips about how to find work in the broadcasting sector.

### Engaging

Channel 4 seeks to engage its viewers in new ways, through television and the online world and, most of all, by exploring ways in which different media platforms can work together to provide a unique kind of public service. Here are a few examples, some of which are mentioned elsewhere in this review:

#### – Election coverage

Channel 4 complemented its TV coverage of the 2005 general election with three linked websites: one providing information about the parties and leading politicians; one, called **fact-check**, which allowed visitors to verify from independent sources the claims made by politicians on the campaign trail. The site proved its worth in the very first days of the campaign when claims about health service provision made by a Cabinet minister had to be withdrawn after fact-check demonstrated them to be false. The third site focused on younger voters, asking them to map their concerns against the official party manifestos and then analysing the consequent impact on their intentions to vote. Oxford University’s Professor of e-democracy called it the most significant interactive project by a UK broadcaster during the whole election campaign.

#### – Media Literacy

4 Learning presented a two-hour special **Why is there so much rubbish on telly?** to explore the commercial pressures on TV schedulers. A three-part series **Last Rights** dramatised a future in which Government control of the internet undermines citizens’ rights and the whole democratic process. **Breaking the News** ([channel4.com/breakingthenews](http://channel4.com/breakingthenews)), mounted in partnership with ITN, allowed a group of young people to create a national news bulletin in real time, web-broadcast it and use it as the basis for a national resource for schools and colleges to find out more about how news is created and reported.

#### – Community

Websites such as **ORINATION** and **Lost Generation**, **The Big Roman Dig** and **IDEASFACTORY** – and many others – enable visitors to create or contribute to virtual communities of interest by sharing and exchanging information and, in the process, creating valuable new databases which enrich existing permanent collections. Other activities during the year included **Digital Africa**, a weekend event which brought young African film-makers to the UK to share their expertise and innovative techniques with their British counterparts.

### Challenging

Channel 4 seeks to challenge its viewers with television and new media services that promote debate, offer platforms to alternative and minority opinions and which ‘think out of the box’.

**Jamie’s School Dinners** and **Demolition** were two powerful examples of such an approach during 2005. Another, **The Big Art Project**, invites communities to propose sites and ideas for major works of public art and will offer the expertise and finance to bring half a dozen of them to realisation. The response has been overwhelming with some 1,500 proposals from communities up and down Britain.

In 2005, Channel 4 explored issues of disability in a range of ground-breaking programmes including **Born to be Different**, **Make Me Normal**, **the House of the Obsessive Compulsives**, **Being Pamela**, **I’m Spasticus** and **DV8: The Cost of Living**. Channel 4’s long-running series **Vee-TV** is a youth entertainment show, presented in British Sign Language with in-vision subtitles. Being made by and for deaf people it challenges many of the norms of network television but, in 2005, the production team sought to engage a wider audience and increased its ratings by 28%. Channel 4 also funded 15 training placements for deaf and disabled people. In partnership with ITN, a disabled journalist post was created within the Channel 4 News team, with appropriate training and mentoring. All these initiatives give disabled people experience, confidence and contacts; as important is the learning experience for the independent producers with whom they work.

The series **War on Terra** looked at climate change and carbon emissions. By providing a platform for the view that it was time to re-assess the contribution of nuclear power generation, the series, broadcast in early January, opened up a debate which was to grow in intensity as the year progressed. The TV series was backed up by a dedicated website. **Channel 4 News** also ran a series of debates on global warming in the run-up to the G8 summit.

**Further details can be found at:**  
[channel4.com/citizen4](http://channel4.com/citizen4)